

## I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Nebraska is one of the Midwestern states in the center of the United States of America. South Dakota borders Nebraska on the north, Iowa on the east, Kansas on the south, Colorado on the southwest, and Wyoming on the west.
- B. The capital of Nebraska is Lincoln, and the largest city is Omaha. There are 93 counties in Nebraska and 535 incorporated cities or towns. Nebraska elects three representatives to Congress.
- C. The state's name was derived from a Native American word meaning 'flat water.'

## II. HISTORY

- A. The early settlers of Nebraska were various migrant Native American tribes who hunted buffalo across the Great Plains. In the early 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, Spanish and French explorers traveled through Nebraska, but never established a permanent presence. The territory was included in the Louisiana Purchase, and Louis and Clark came through on their journey up the Missouri River.
- B. The state was populated as various migrations such as the Oregon Trail, Mormon Trail, and Denver Trail came through the Midwest. Even though the federal government designated the area as Indian country and forbid white settlers to establish their homesteads, white Americans migrated to the area and the state was admitted to the union in 1854.

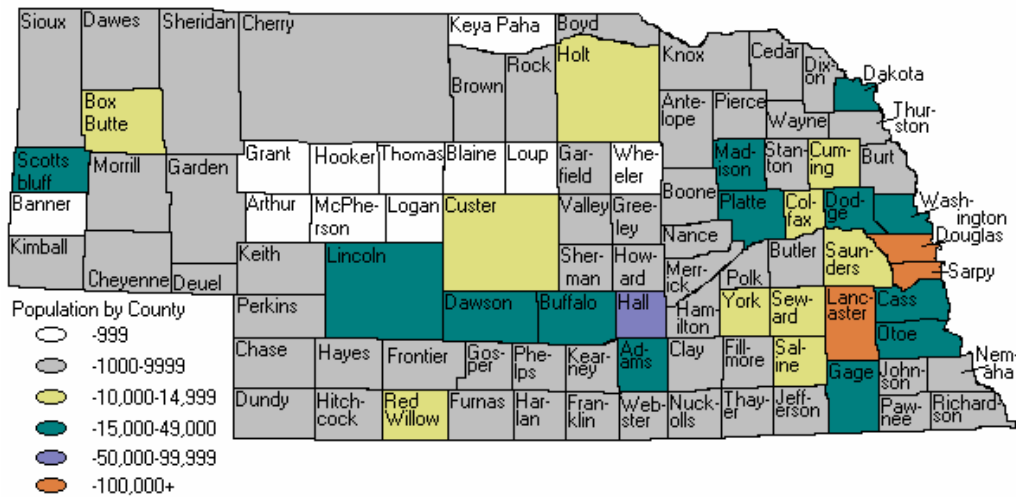


## III. POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- A. In the 2000 census, 1,711,263 people lived in Nebraska, increasing by 7% from 1999 when 1,578,417 people inhabited the state. The estimated population for 2003 was 1,739,291. The majority of the inhabitants are white, though the state has a small population of African Americans and persons of Latino or Hispanic decent.
- B. 69.8% of the population lives in urban areas, the rest living in rural areas.
- C. The three largest cities in Nebraska are:
  - 1. Omaha            390,007
  - 2. Lincoln           225,581
  - 3. Bellevue          44,382

## State of Nebraska

- D. The average total income for working individuals is \$51,000, and the average per capita income \$30,750.
- E. The following shows a breakdown of the Nebraskan population by county:



## IV. GEOGRAPHY AND SOIL TYPES

- A. The state of Nebraska includes 77,358 square miles, making it the 16<sup>th</sup> largest state in the US. It is roughly rectangular with a panhandle extending over the northern portion of Colorado. "Although Nebraska lacks high mountains or rugged hill lands, its plains topography displays a variety of landscapes. The eastern portion of the state, the Dissected Till Plains, was once covered by glaciers, which deposited a deep layer of till (mixed clay and stones). A wind-carried deposit of fine silt (loess) was laid on top of this, and the surface was gradually cut up by the action of streams and rivers. The dark, fertile soils of this region form some of the state's richest farmland.



"The western four-fifths of Nebraska lies in the Great Plains region. The surface of this region was largely formed as streams flowing from the Rocky Mountains to the west deposited beds of sands, gravel, silts, and mud. In the south central area of Nebraska the flat and fertile Loess Plains were formed by the accumulation of windblown silt. To the north of the Platte River are the low Sand Hills, which are ancient sand dunes. In the west Panhandle, erosion has produced isolated buttes and, in the extreme northwest, the picturesque Badlands region." <sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> from <http://www.worldalmanacforkids.com/explore/states/nebraska.html>

- B. Overall, the soil types vary across the state. In the eastern portion, the soil is silty and clayey. The rest of the state's soil has a more sandy consistency, except for areas around the Platte River and other bodies of water where the soil is loamy.

## V. RIVERS AND LAKES

The Missouri River runs along the eastern side, and the Platte River flows east through most of the state. The other major rivers in the state are the Niobrara, Elkhorn, Loup, Republican and Big Blue rivers. The major lakes in the state are man-made and include Lewis and Clark Lake, Lake C. W. McConaughy, Harlan County Lake, and the Calamas Reservoir. Many smaller natural lakes dot the sand hills area.

## VI. CLIMATE

- A. Nebraska's climate is fairly similar across the state. Nebraska weather is typical of the interior of a large landmass in temperate zone-variable climates. Rapid weather changes are common due to the movement of large moist air from the Gulf of Mexico and southwest moving into the central regions of United States. The summers are hot and humid with average temperatures in the upper 70's, low 80's, though afternoon temperatures frequently reach the upper 90's and 100's. Winters are harsh with temperatures in the 10's and 20's. Snowfall is frequent during the winter and the annual average accumulation is 32 inches for the eastern portion and 38 inches for the western.
- B. Annual rainfall ranges from 15 inches in the western part of the state to 30 inches in the eastern part. Rainfall occurs mainly during the late spring and early summer, occasionally escalating to thunderstorms or hailstorms. Rainstorms, however, are separated by periods of drought.

## VII. GOVERNMENT

- A. Nebraska operates under a constitution adopted in 1875. Nebraska is the only state in the US with a unicameral legislative branch. Until 1934, it operated under the traditional bicameral house but this form was criticized for being outdated, inefficient, and unnecessary. Nebraskans desired a system that would provide a faster, more transparent way of passing laws. The resulting unicameral system is indeed more efficient. Now, there are 49 legislators in the house, each serving a



four-year term and elected on a nonpartisan ballot.

- B. The Supreme Court of Nebraska consists of seven justices. The court of appeals is composed of six judges. The major trial courts are the district courts that have a total of forty-eight justices.

## VIII.ECONOMY

### A. Agriculture

1. The main contributor to Nebraska's economy is a diverse agricultural base. This base consists of a steady beef and corn industry, along with soybeans, hogs, and wheat and brings about \$9.6 billion to the state. Livestock contributes \$6.1 billion to this total and crops contribute \$3.5 billion. The cattle industry alone makes \$4.9 billion annually and is second in the United States.
2. 95% of the land in Nebraska is devoted to agricultural pursuits. In 2002, there were 50,000 farms in the state, each averaging 900 acres. This greatly differs from the farming situation in the 1950's when there were over 100,000 farms in Nebraska, each averaging slightly over 400 acres.
3. Even though agriculture is the largest industry in Nebraska, it employs only 65,000 people. Nebraska's workforce is 950,000.

Top five employers of the state:

Type of Work	# Employed
Services	261,000
Trade	214,000
Government	157,800
Manufacturing	101,000
Agriculture	65,000

- B. Nebraska also houses many banking and technological companies such as the Mutual of Omaha, Berkshire Hathaway, Union Pacific, and Ameritrade. In addition to these, Nebraska has manufacturing and chemical industries and small petroleum and natural gas mining operations.
- C. Nebraska trades internationally with 180 countries; Japan, Canada, and Mexico are the top three and account for 61% of Nebraska's international trade. Nebraska exports mainly processed food items, but also exports machinery, oil and gas, and transportation equipment.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://international.neded.org/neexps.htm>

- D. The financial center of Nebraska is the city of Omaha. Its location on the Missouri River in addition to housing the headquarters of several major corporations gives Omaha an important trade position both inside the US and internationally. Omaha is home to Offutt Air Force Base, the location of the Strategic Air Command during the Cold War and the current location of the US Strategic Command.

#### IX. TRANSPORTATION

Nebraska has 64,000 miles of local public road and 11,952 miles of major highway. I-80 runs through the middle of the state and is the main commercial and recreational highway in the state. The major forms of industrial transportation are railroad with 3,537 miles in operation and barge transport on the Missouri River to Kansas City and Sioux City.

#### X. TOURISM

Most of the tourists in Nebraska come from other midwestern states. There are many historical sites to visit and an extensive state park system; park attendance topped 10 million in 2002. A few of the top tourist destinations in Nebraska are the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Cabela's outdoor store in Kearney, and Mahoney State Park.

#### XI. ENERGY

Most of the energy in Nebraska is provided by fossil fuels; two nuclear power plants, hydroelectric power, and wind power supplement this. Uniquely, all the energy companies in Nebraska are publicly owned.

#### XII. LAND USE

Of the 77,358 square miles in Nebraska, 95% of the land is devoted to agricultural use with the remaining 5% as developed land or forest area.

Breakdown of agricultural land:

Type of Land	# of Acres
Rangeland	23,089,100
Cropland	19,469,200
Pasture	1,800,500

#### XIII. NATURAL HAZARDS

##### A. Agriculture

Because of Nebraska's large agricultural contributions to the United States, the state is always aware of potential agricultural diseases both naturally occurring or caused by intentional introduction, affecting both crops and livestock.

B. Drought

Due to the importance of agriculture in Nebraska's economy, drought is a serious threat to the state. Although drought does not often carry consequences of human fatalities, crop and livestock damage is a reality that many farmers experience. However, since 1999, Nebraska has experienced consistently low amounts of rain, causing shortages in the water supplies.

C. Earthquake

Several earthquakes have been reported in the state, though not frequent and rarely causing large amounts of damage. Nebraska is not at great risk for high intensity earthquakes, but the potential exists for earthquakes to cause structural damage in the state. The largest earthquake was felt in March 1964, had a magnitude of 5.1, and was intensity VII. The most recent occurred in February 2003.

D. Flood<sup>6</sup>

1. The differentiation between flooding and flash flooding exists in the time period between the event causing the flooding and the actual flooding. If the flooding occurs within six hours of the event, it is identified as a flash flood otherwise it is recognized as a flood.



2. Most floods in Nebraska are caused by excessive rainfall, snowmelt, or ice jams in rivers or creeks. The potential exists for floods to occur after heavy reservoir releases. Flooding due to rainfall normally occurs in conjunction with other natural hazards like thunderstorms and often tornadoes. Recently, three storm systems have caused flooding or flash flooding in areas across the state. In June and July of 2003, a storm in the eastern portion of the state caused an overflow of the Little Blue River that resulted in the flooding of several cities in Jefferson County.
3. Most flash floods occurring in Nebraska are the result of intense rainfall in a short amount of time. A severe flash flood occurred in 1999 in Omaha when 10.48 inches of rain fell in a 24-hour period. The resulting flooding caused serious damage totaling almost \$295 million and one fatality. In late May of 2004, a storm system moving across the central and eastern portions of the state caused flooding in Omaha and subsequent structural damage of thirty-one buildings.

E. Severe Winter Storms

Nebraska receives on average 35 inches of snow each winter, and these snows can easily turn into severe winter storms. In addition to just snow, ice often accumulates to compound the problems. Winter storms present serious problems due to their wide

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/fs/FS-025-96/#HDR03>

range of damages- transportation risks and blockage, power outages, environmental damage, limited emergency response, and flooding following the melting.

F. Thunderstorm/High Wind

1. Thunderstorms occur on a regular basis in Nebraska, but some can escalate to dangerous levels. The lightning, rain, hail, and intense winds that can happen during thunderstorms each have their own set of damaging effects. For example, in 2003, a hailstone with a diameter of seven inches was retrieved in the city of Aurora.
2. The winds in Nebraska average 16.8 mph, but reach much higher levels during thunderstorms and tornadoes. These dangerous winds can achieve speeds of over 100 mph, causing damage to buildings, trees, and frequently railroad structures. Another dangerous factor of continuous high winds is erosion. In Nebraska, the most erosion has occurred in the panhandle.

G. Tornadoes<sup>7</sup>

Each year, there are on average 60 confirmed tornadoes in the state. On average, tornadoes kill one person per year. Nebraska is part of Tornado Alley and is fifth in the nation for tornado frequency. In June of 2003 and May of 2004, several large sets of tornadoes ripped through the southeastern portion of the state causing extensive damage.

H. Wildfire

Wildfires pose a serious threat to both the urban and agricultural areas of Nebraska. Grassfires spread quickly, especially when combined with drought, and can damage large areas of land. Some of the common causes of wildfire are debris burning, equipment use, and lightning. The USGS monitors the vegetation greenness to determine which areas are at higher risk than others for wildfire to start and spread.



## XII. MANMADE HAZARDS

A. Terrorism

This is a hazard that can take many forms depending on the intentions of the instigating person or group. Nebraska has many critical assets that could be targets for terrorism, whether international or domestic.

---

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.hprcc.unl.edu/nebraska/>